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LETTER DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey to you the Presidential statement made on the occasion of the visit of Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

I would be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Manzi BAKURAMUTSA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Rwanda to the United Nations

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Annex

Presidential statement made on the occasion of the visit of Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

On the occasion of the visit to Rwanda by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who had brought a special message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Government of Rwanda is pleased to record its appreciation and high regard of the efforts and support by the international community towards the reconstruction of the country.

The Government reiterates its unflinching determination to do everything possible to enable the safe return of all Rwandan refugees, in the letter and spirit of the Bujumbura declaration. No efforts will be spared to ensure that every Rwandan enjoys equal right to citizenship and protection by the Government. The return of all Rwandans is without preconditions, and this right is inalienable whatever the circumstances.

It is on this basis that when Rwandan nationals in Zaire were expelled under humiliating conditions, the Government employed great effort, despite our immense limitations, to ensure that all those expelled were safely and conveniently settled into their homes. The number of persons that crossed at Cyangungu and Gisenyi were 7,268 and 5,079 respectively. Of the total number of 12,347 persons expelled from Zaire, only 42 persons were separated from the rest at the border post of Cyangungu, while the number for Gisenyi was 205 persons. The separation was a safety precaution as 123 of those separated were soldiers of the former army, and they have, after screening, been taken to Gako Military Training Centre for a reintegration programme. Among those separated were 55 criminals that were in jail at Goma, and the rest were suspected of the crime of genocide. The total number of persons (69) being held for suspected involvement in genocide constitute about 0.6 per cent of all those expelled.

Within four days, all the returnees had been settled in their properties, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and other members of the international community. These organizations have followed the returnees into their areas and are working with the Government to help these persons to start a new life.

In anticipation of further repatriation, reception centres at the border have been reinforced with the involvement of UNAMIR, UNHCR and other organizations so as to receive and provide basic services to returnees. These centres will remain open and are to be further strengthened to receive more returnees. The Government of Rwanda appeals to all the nationals who are outside to take advantage of this momentum. Furthermore, where necessary, due process of law will be followed under international monitoring. This and the ongoing strengthening of the judiciary constitute supplementary guarantees that there will be no arbitrary arrests.

The population that had settled on properties of other persons has been mobilized to vacate them for their legitimate owners, and any disputes over property are being handled by special committees at various levels of government.

All these efforts made towards safe return and reintegration of returnees is paying off dividends, as is evidenced by the rising numbers of persons returning voluntarily from Tanzania, Burundi and Zaire. From Burundi alone over 30,000 have repatriated voluntarily, most of them spontaneously over the last two months. It is expected that most of the 100,000 to 150,000 still in Burundi will have repatriated by the end of the year.

The Government is developing further mechanisms in collaboration with the United Nations system and other members of the international community to ensure that more people can be comfortably received in large numbers.

Similarly, the Government is soliciting the support and involvement of the international community in seeking innovative ways of expediting the healing process of the society and national reconciliation. This process will be possible once all the Rwandan nationals are settled in Rwanda and are actively involved.

The Government of Rwanda wishes to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, and the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for their manifest interest and untiring efforts in seeking solutions for the problems of Rwanda and Rwandan refugees.